

§ 62-140. Discrimination prohibited.

(a) No public utility shall, as to rates or services, make or grant any unreasonable preference or advantage to any person or subject any person to any unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage. No public utility shall establish or maintain any unreasonable difference as to rates or services either as between localities or as between classes of service. The Commission may determine any questions of fact arising under this section; provided that it shall not be an unreasonable preference or advantage or constitute discrimination against any person, firm or corporation or general rate payer for telephone utilities to contract with motels, hotels and hospitals to pay reasonable commissions in connection with the handling of intrastate toll calls charged to a guest or patient and collected by the motel, hotel or hospital; provided further, that payment of such commissions shall be in accordance with uniform tariffs which shall be subject to the approval of the Commission. Provided further, that it shall not be considered an unreasonable preference or advantage for the Commission to order, if it finds the public interest so requires, a reduction in local telephone rates for low-income residential consumers meeting a means test established by the Commission in order to match any reduction in the interstate subscriber line charge authorized by the Federal Communications Commission. If the State repeals any State funding mechanism for a reduction in the local telephone rates for low-income residential consumers, the Commission shall take appropriate action to eliminate any requirement for the reduced rate funded by the repealed State funding mechanism. For the purposes of this section, a State funding mechanism for a reduction in the local telephone rates includes a tax credit allowed for the public utility to recover the reduction in rates.

Nothing in this section prohibits the Commission from establishing different rates for natural gas service to counties that are substantially unserved, to the extent that those rates reflect the cost of providing service to the unserved counties and upon a finding by the Commission that natural gas service would not otherwise become available to the counties.

(b) The Commission shall make reasonable and just rules and regulations:

- (1) To prevent discrimination in the rates or services of public utilities.
- (2) To prevent the giving, paying or receiving of any rebate or bonus, directly or indirectly, or misleading or deceiving the public in any manner as to rates charged for the services of public utilities.

(c) No public utility shall offer or pay any compensation or consideration or furnish any equipment to secure the installation or adoption of the use of such utility service except upon filing of a schedule of such compensation or consideration or equipment to be furnished and approved thereof by the Commission, and offering such compensation, consideration or equipment to all persons within the same classification using or applying for such public utility service; provided, in considering the reasonableness of any such schedule filed by a public utility the Commission shall consider, among other things, evidence of consideration or compensation paid by any competitor, regulated or nonregulated, of the public utility to secure the installation or adoption of the use of such competitor's service. Provided, further, that nothing herein shall prohibit a public utility from carrying out any contractual commitment in existence at the time of the enactment hereof, so long as such program does not extend beyond December 31, 1963. For the purpose of this subsection, "public utility" shall include any electric membership corporation operating within this State, and the terms "utility service" and "public utility service" shall include the service rendered by any such electric membership corporation. (1899, c. 164, s. 2, subsecs. 3, 5; Rev., s. 1095; 1913, c. 127, s. 6; C.S., s. 1054; 1933, c. 134, s. 8; c. 307, s. 6; 1941, c. 97; 1963, c. 1165, s. 1; 1965, c. 287, s. 8; 1977, 2nd Sess., c. 1146; 1985, c. 694, s. 1; 1997-426, s. 1; 2013-363, s. 11.1.)